



Assembly Bill 32

In 2006, the California Legislature passed AB 32 (Nunez), the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. The law requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop regulatory and market mechanisms that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. In January 2009, CARB approved a scoping plan for AB 32 outlining preliminary mechanisms for emissions reductions, including a cap-and-trade program, renewable energy portfolio and more.

The scoping plan identifies local governments as “essential partners” in achieving the State’s reduction goals by using their local authority and influence to reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) through planning and permitting processes, local ordinances, outreach and education efforts, and municipal operations. The plan also encourages local governments to adopt a goal to reduce GHG emissions by 15% by 2020.

AB 32 has caused a ripple effect among cities, counties and environmental groups throughout the state. In the State of California Attorney General v. San Bernardino County in 2007, the attorney general’s office argued that the environmental impact report for San Bernardino’s new general plan did not conform to the overall goals of AB 32 because it did not adequately analyze or mitigate the effects of development on global warming. San Bernardino County settled with the State by agreeing to produce a greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan and, at the same time, furthered California’s commitment to addressing climate change.

In September 2008, the attorney general reached another settlement agreement concerning climate change, this time with the City of Stockton. According to the attorney general’s office and the Sierra Club, the City of Stockton did not adequately address climate change in its 2035 general plan update and corresponding environmental impact report. The City of Stockton settled with the attorney general by agreeing to adopt a climate action plan designed to reduce sprawl, increase infill development, promote public transit and encourage more energy-efficient buildings.¹

¹ California Attorney General’s Office, “California Environmental Quality Act – Global Warming,” <http://www.ag.ca.gov/globalwarming/ceqa.php> (accessed October 16, 2008).